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648 a fact which has been a determinant in their historical development and an important factor in speculations about prehistoric events.

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174 Until further archaeological evidence permits greater certainty, the original settlement of the Ryukyus is believed to have taken place predominantly from the Asiatic mainland, with occasional influx from the southern islands, Formosa, the Philippines, and Indonesia (Kerr, 1958). Surviving culture elements of great antiquity support these theories. Most frequently cited are a basic form of Shinto, characteristic of the religion, and the shamanistic role of the priestesses. Specifically, the "curved jewels," formerly worn by all priestesses, are mentioned as apparent links with the neolithic cultures of Japan.

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174 On the other hand, sporadic contact with the islands to the south is evidenced by culture traits, such as raised houses of tropical design (common to all of Japan) and perhaps the practice of "mother roasting," a period of recuperation after the birth of a child during which the mother is kept near a fire. This custom is widespread in Malaysia (Cole, 1915:155).

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[97] Linguistic evidence points to a separation of Okinawan from a common proto Japanese language about 1500 years ago (Hattori, 1954). This may indicate a southern movement of peoples from Japan under the pressure of the Yayoi people who introduced the wet rice complex into southwestern and central Japan at this period. That this was not the earliest settlement of the Ryukyus, however, is evidenced by remains in the Ryukyus of the earlier Jomon period.

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175 From the first mention of the Ryukyus in Chinese annals of 605 A.D. until the end of the nineteenth century when Japan formally annexed the islands, they stood in a curious relationship of dependency toward China and Japan. Both nations claimed suzerainty over the kingdom of Okinawa with its royal court in Shuri and extracted tribute. Eventually the Lord of Satsuma in southern Japan extended his sovereignty over the Ryukyus. But with ties to China remaining, Okinawa participated in both Chinese and Japanese culture, which disseminated through the urban trading center of Naha into the outlying areas. It is this intermediate cultural position which still gives Okinawa a peculiar character, although it long ago became part of Japan and abandoned direct contacts with China.

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175 In 1872 Japan formally declared its claims on the Ryukyuan kingdom, and after deposing the last king in 1879, made the Ryukyuan islands a province of Japan, with the capital at Naha. Between this time and the present, intensive contact with Japan has led to an overwhelming absorption of Japanese culture, a willingness on the part of Okinawans to adopt Japanese ways and to identify with Japan as their